

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SPM-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03

SS-20 USIA-15 EURE-00 DRC-01 HEW-08 AID-20 IO-14

OMB-01 NIC-01 /147 W

----- 048601

P R 191201Z JUL 74

FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5823

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL BELFAST

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PBOR, EI

SUBJ: COSGRAVE UNDER FIRE

REF: DUBLIN 0951

SUMMARY: PRESS AND POLITICIANS CONTINUE BITTER CRITICISM OF PM COSGRAVE'S BEHAVIOR IN CONTRACEPTIVE ISSUE. MOST ACCEPT THAT HE HAD RIGHT TO VOTE WITH HIS CONSCIENCE, BUT EVEN HIS SUPPORTERS FIND NO ADEQUATE EXPLANATION FOR FAILURE TO TELL PARTY COLLEAGUES HIS INTENTION. CONTACTS EXPECT THAT GOI WILL CONTINUE IN OFFICE WITH MINIMUM DISRUPTION, SINCE ALTERNATIVES ARE NOT ATTRACTIVE. MOST BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT PM'S ACTION/HAS CREATED UNAVOIDABLE LONG-TERM PROBLEMS FOR GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY

1. UNTIL JULY 16, PM COSGRAVE HAD ENJOYED REMARKABLY LONG HONEYMOON WITH PRESS. MAIN SUBJECT OF PRAISE WAS HIS HAND-PICKED CABINET, WHICH CONTRASTED VERY WELL WITH THAT OF PREVIOUS FIANNA FAIL GOVT. COSGRAVE ALSO ENJOYED HIGH PERSONAL CREDIBILITY. WITH HIS SURPRISE VOTE AGAINST HIS  
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OWN GOVT'S CONTRACEPTIVE BILL, THE HONEYMOON ENDED WITH A

JOLT, AND PAPERS NOW EMPHASIZE HIS "BETRAYAL" OF CABINET.  
"IRISH TIMES," USUALLY PRO-COALITION TAKES THIS LINE.  
IT ALSO ACCUSES HIM OF A "PERVERSE ACTION" IN MISLEADING  
HIS COLLEAGUES; SAYS THAT "ONLY DICTATORS  
CAN AFFORD THE LUXURY OF SUCH A NEUROTIC SENSE OF PRIVACY;"  
PREDICTS "DISARRAY ON THE BACK BENCHES;" AND EXPECTS THAT  
EFFECTS OF HIS "SELFISH BLUNDER" WILL LAST A LONG TIME.  
"IRISH INDEPENDENT" EXPECTS MAJOR STRAIN BETWEEN LABOR  
AND FINE GAEIL, QUOTING LABOR DEPUTY THORNLEY WHO SAYS COSGRAVE  
HAS "FORFEITED ANY RIGHT" TO SPEAK OF IRISH UNITY.

2. LOCAL PAPERS ALSO QUOTED CRITICAL REACTIONS FROM NI.  
LOYALIST "AMUSEMENT" HURTS, AS IRISHMEN ABOVE ALL HATE  
CONDESCENSION AND RIDICULE. LOCAL PRESS CARRIES EDITORIAL  
FROM MODERATE "BELFAST TELEGRAPH," WHICH SAID: "THE BILL  
WAS INADEQUATE IN ITS EFFORTS TO ALLOW PEOPLE THE RIGHT TO  
USE CONTRACEPTIVES IF THEY SO WISH AND, HAD IT BECOME LAW,  
MANY OF ITS PROVISIONS WOULD HAVE BEEN REPRESSIVE. BUT IT  
WAS DEFEATED NOT ON THESE GROUNDS, BUT BECAUSE IT WAS STILL  
TOO LIBERAL FOR THE DIAL... ...WHILE THE SOUTH IS READY  
TO ASK US TO ACCEPT REVOLUTIONARY POLITICAL CHANGE WITHOUT  
A QUIBBLE, THERE IS NOT THOUGHT OF RECIPROCATION IN THE  
FIELD OF BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS."

3. IN FLAP OVER POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF COSGRAVE'S  
BEHAVIOR, SUBSTANCE OF ISSUE HAS BEEN ALMOST FORGOTTEN.  
LOCAL FAMILY PLANNING SERVICE, HOWEVER, HAS RELEASED  
STATEMENT WELCOMING DEFEAT OF "REPRESSIVE" AND "NEGATIVE"  
BILL. DIRECTOR OF SERVICE TOLD US THAT SHE HAD BEEN  
GENUINELY WORRIED ABOUT BILL, SINCE IT WOULD HAVE ALLOWED  
DISTRIBUTION OF CONTRACEPTIVES ONLY TO MARRIED PEOPLE, AND  
SERVICE HAS NO MEANS TO VERIFY MARITAL STATUS OF CLIENTS. BILL  
MIGHT ALSO HAVE FORBIDDEN DIRECT DISTRIBUTION OF CONTRACEPTIVES  
BY FAMILY PLANNING CLINICS. IN PRESENT STATE OF LEGAL LIMBO, A  
CLINIC OPERATES EFFECTIVELY IN POOR REGION OF DUBLIN AND IS  
ABLE TO SERVE MANY LOW-INCOME WOMEN.

4. COSGRAVE HIMSELF HAS NOT EXPLAINED HIS VOTE AND IS  
NOT EXPECTED TO DO SO. WE HAVE TALKED TO CONTACTS IN ALL  
THREE PARTIES, AND ALL CONCUR THAT SUBSTANCE OF VOTE (BUT NOT  
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SECRETIVE TACTICS) IS EXPLAINED BY COSGRAVE'S FUNDAMENTALIST,  
PRE-VATICAN-TWO CATHOLICISM. SOURCES BELIEVE HE JUST DID NOT  
WANT TO SUBSCRIBE TO MEASURE ON CONTRACEPTION, EVEN IF ITS EFFECT  
WAS TO RESTRICT AVAILABILITY. THIS PRESUMED MOTIVATION DOUBTLESS  
INCREASES INDIGNATION OF LIBERALS, BUT IT IS NEVERTHELESS WIDELY  
RESPECTED AS MATTER OF CONSCIENCE. ALL SOURCES, HOWEVER, FAIL TO  
FIND ADEQUATE EXPLANATION FOR COSGRAVE'S BEHAVIOR TOWARD HIS OWN  
MINISTERS AND BACKBENCHERS. MOST WIDESPREAD GUESS IS THAT HE WAS

REASSERTING AUTHORITY AFTER RECENT CRITICISM THAT CONOR CRUISE-O'BRIEN WAS WEARING THE PANTS. EVEN IN HIS OWN PARTY, HOWEVER, CONTACTS AGREE THAT COSGRAVE PICKED AN AMAZING METHOD.

5. THERE HAVE BEEN NO RESIGNATIONS YET, AND WHILE THEY ARE NOT QUITE RULED OUT, MOST CONTACTS EXPECT THAT GOI WILL ROCK ALONG -- FOR TIME BEING. COALITION DEPUTIES ARE KEENLY AWARE THAT A GOVERNMENT COLLAPSE OVER THIS "FARCE" COULD RETURN FIANNA FAIL TO POWER INDEFINITELY. AT SAME TIME, MANY THINK COSGRAVE HAS MADE GREATEST BLUNDER OF ANY IRISH PM IN RECENT TIMES, SURPASSING LYNCH'S WORST. THERE APPEARS TO BE GENERAL EXPECTATION THAT LOSS OF CONFIDENCE IN COSGRAVE WILL GIVE COALITION CONTINUING TROUBLE. IN THIS SENSE JULY 16 MAY PROVE TO HAVE BEEN A TURNING POINT.  
MOORE

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## Message Attributes

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